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Commission on the Status of Women
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Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work

Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World, Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem, Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Union of Women, International Association for Counseling, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of Thailand, Salvation Army, Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women's International Zionist Organization, and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

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Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 50th session of CSW the statement below for information and consideration.

Investing in women and girls makes economic sense, because discrimination leads to lower productivity and higher health costs, results in higher death rates of women, and is a major threat to efforts to reduce poverty.

A lack of contraceptives, family planning support, and reproductive health assistance leads to more than half a million women dying every year from pregnancy-related causes, most of them preventable. This lack of access to contraceptives is one of the primary causes of an estimated 76 million unwanted pregnancies, and 19 million unsafe abortions each year.

HIV/AIDS constitutes the leading cause of death and illness among women aged 15 to 44, and the study, the State of the World Population 2005, estimates that 250 million years of productive life are lost as a result.

Investing in basic education for girls and women helps to promote their health. The ability to read and write improves the quality of their life. Education free from gender bias gives freedom through knowledge and helps to promote human security.

Expanding women's access to and command over income and productive resources contributes to poverty reduction and reduction in child mortality. Women are instrumental in protecting the environment and ensuring effective use of natural resources including water, soil and trees.

Therefore the undersigned

- state that promoting and protecting human rights as well as building democracy are fundamental prerequisites in eradicating poverty;

- note that health services must address sexual and reproductive rights, including programmes to combat and prevent HIV/AIDS which disproportionately affects women and girls; consider access to medication to combat this disease to be a fundamental right and call on national governments and international organisations to introduce measures guaranteeing its availability;

- propose to enact legislation, or implement legislation already enacted, leading to the development of programmes that provide inclusive and non-discriminatory education and training, health and security systems, to prevent poverty, violence and internal national conflict;

- request to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic systems, ensuring access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;

- urge to provide women with equitable access to investment and development so that they can develop new dimensions of leadership in business and employment;

- state that the Millennium Development Goals will remain hollow words if development policies do not shift from "gender blind" to "gender responsive";

- call on governments to re-establish the Millennium Development Goals as the core objective of National Action Plans and international development policy and underline that gender should become the "default" mechanism for donors, governments and communities in reaching the MDGs;

- urge the richest countries to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of GDP for official development assistance (ODA) if the poorest countries draw up their anti-poverty programmes to open up trade and investment and tackle corruption.